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Digital commonwealth

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Published in:
Creative Citizens' Variety Pack

Published: 30/12/2014

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication on the UWS Academic Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
McGillivray, D., Jones, J., McCandlish, A., & McPherson, G. (2014). Digital commonwealth: Telling stories case study. In D. Lockton, C. Greene, A. Casey, L. Raby, & A. Vickress (Eds.), Creative Citizens' Variety Pack: Inspiring Digital Ideas From Community Projects (pp. 1-6). Royal College of Art.

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Telling Stories



Digital Commonwealth

David McGillivray, Jennifer Jones,
Alison McCandlish & Gayle McPherson.

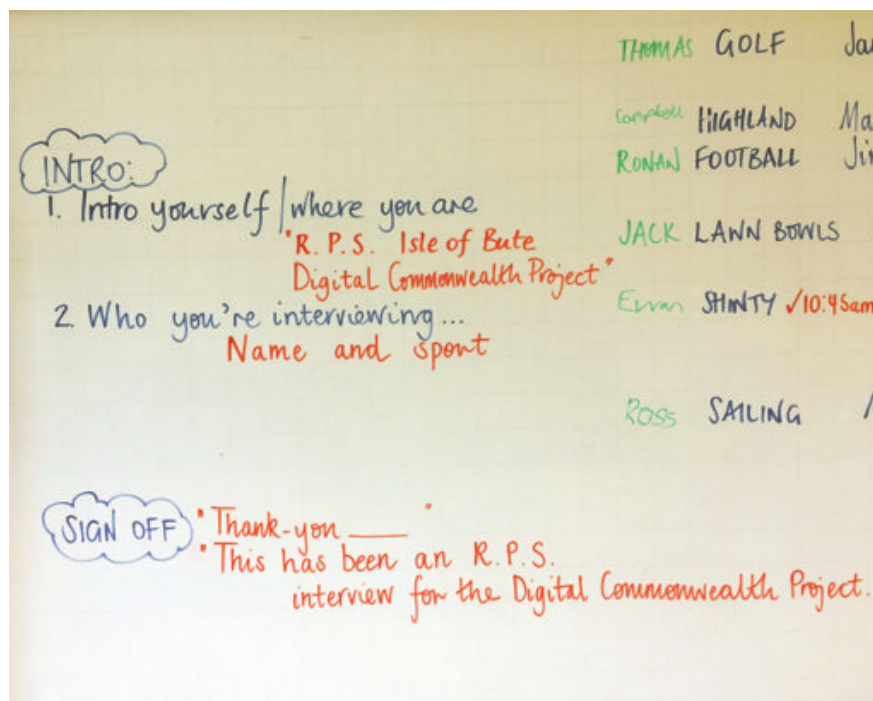
DIGITAL COMMONWEALTH



Credit: Digital Commonwealth.



Digital Commonwealth participants on Orkney get to grips with using smart phones to produce a short interview with a local Kirkwall librarian, whilst being filmed for the Community Channel's Brilliant Scotland programme. Credit: Digital Commonwealth.



Rothesay Primary on the Isle of Bute prepared and researched questions to ask local sporting heroes to record and showcase activities the Isles are famous for. Credit: Digital Commonwealth.

Digital Commonwealth

Across Scotland

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Digital Tools Used

Smart Phones,
Tablets, YouTube,
Google Maps,
WordPress,
Flickr, AudioBoo,
Twitter, Facebook,
SoundCloud,
Mozilla Webmaker,
Audacity,
Filmic Pro,
iMovie, Videopad.

The Digital Commonwealth (DCW) project enables people and groups to make the best use of creative tools and digital technologies to tell their stories, making the process more accessible.

About

Digital Commonwealth aims to enhance groups' and individuals' abilities to ensure their voices are heard in the saturated (and often commercially-motivated) 'media landscape' of a major event such as the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Over the course of a year, Digital Commonwealth have worked on a range of projects with individuals and groups to develop their skills in using blogging, audio, video and social media for storytelling, in communities and in schools across Scotland. These projects are led by practice-researchers at University of the West of Scotland, and funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

The work has built on the University's expertise in songwriting, creative writing, filmmaking, and facilitated workshops with local community groups around the institution's four campuses in Ayr, Dumfries, Hamilton and Paisley. This has led to participants telling their stories in a variety of different ways and using a variety of media, from documentary films and creative songwriting to blogging and social media.

This has included work with Alzheimer's Scotland, sheltered accommodation providers, voluntary action groups, disability support services and multicultural women's groups.

What is the impact of the project?

Through empowering people to use freely available, mobile, digital media tools and techniques, the project has reached out to individuals and groups experiencing social, cultural or economic marginalisation, whether related to age, ethnicity, poverty, disability or social isolation.

How did digital tools make a difference?

Use what's in your pocket. DCW encouraged people to use familiar technology to shift from media consumption to production, rather than learning specific tools that later become obsolete. Participants often use Facebook and YouTube socially or personally, but workshops showed people how they can contribute to online conversations by capturing existing, but often unheard, narratives. Once participants felt confident using their own mobile devices for producing as well as consuming stories, the DCW project encouraged them to apply this beyond the Commonwealth Games.

What next?

Now that the 2014 Commonwealth Games are over, the project will use the resources, workshop materials and outputs developed to help explore, inform and transform how digital media literacies can be taught in school and community settings across Scotland and further afield. All of the materials produced by participants will be archived digitally. These archives will be developed by the partnerships formed through the project. This will ensure that the community groups involved in our project can continue to receive advice and support to ensure their practice is sustained. The research team will also distribute our findings widely, to inform others of good practice.

What Others Can Learn

How to recruit people

A project focused on people wishing to improve their digital literacy skills cannot rely only on digital means to recruit people. As an official Scottish Government Legacy 2014 project, we were able to talk to contacts across all local authorities, allowing us to involve schools and community groups who were already participating in Commonwealth Games-related projects. Using existing networks, relationships and collaborations allowed us to open doors to schools, community organisations and charities that were not currently involved. This requires face-to-face time, building trust, and clear communication about the project's aims and expectations.

Be flexible

People and groups have their own interpretations of what 'digital literacy' and being a 'beginner' is, and what training entails. Some groups have access to gold-standard technological tools, but may not have the skillsets to use them most effectively. Others are working with outdated hardware and software, or even have internet filters preventing access to certain tools. When delivering a nationally distributed project, it is crucial to audit each facility prior to delivery. This ensures learners can participate fully and appropriate training schedules can be designed.

Use events as a catalyst

Focusing on digital literacies, storytelling and the Commonwealth Games enabled a shared context for producing content. But small scale events can also provide a community focus to gather around, where the production of citizen-led content can lead to further documentation and awareness-raising. Event attendees are often more willing to contribute views, allowing for participants to gain experience in approaching the general public or representatives for interviews for the web.